

#ECAfrica's EYE launches to foster youth entrepreneurship

Wits Business School Masters graduate, Taynita Harilal is boldly committing to actively advance entrepreneurship in South Africa with the launch of the #ECAfrica - Evolution of Youth Entrepreneurship (EYE) Development Programme. By connecting youth innovators and problem solvers in search of action based support, #ECAfrica EYE will foster economic development and promote new venture creation.



Source: www.pexels.com

The #ECAfrica Evolution of Youth Entrepreneurship (EYE) Development Programme intends to set up a social enterprise relevant to the changes wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic, to drive an agenda that facilitates sustainable business practices which foster entrepreneurial practices and skills at a pre-tertiary level. Purpose-driven, #ECAfrica EYE connects youth visionaries who will thrive in ecosystems that can nurture, resource and support passionate, young and dynamic mindsets looking to solve collective societal problems.

Aimed at secondary school students in Grade 11 from geographically and social economically diverse ecosystems, the mentoring, training and educational project intends to equip learners with skills and resources that will allow them to start their ventures or actively participate in entrepreneurial practices. The vision is to bring this cohort to a central conversation where ideas can be shared with curious minds and create a pipeline of emerging, responsible entrepreneurs who are wired to drive the change they want to create.

Pivoting off her learnings from her recently completed Masters and inspired by her participation in the Gibbs Spirit of Youth programme, the already entrepreneurial Harilal has chosen to invest her graduation ceremony funds into the project to kickstart the programme.

“I presented this as part of my summer school invitation to participate in the Denmark Business School summer school programme and my project idea was met with a favourable response. Linking it to #ECAfrica made sense as I did my Masters thesis based on second-generation female succession planning and this allowed me to think broadly on how this can be a catalyst for conscious planning,” shares Harilal.

Promoting entrepreneurial education

The project aims to address the lack of entrepreneurial education in schools and the promotion of new venture creation in the country. Harilal has already started to shape the piloting phases of the project and plans to scale continually. With knowledge and skills transfer at the forefront of the programme, the incubator will be an immersive experience that will include educational lessons, guest speakers, interactive activities and practical exercises that will challenge the learners to broaden the scope of their understanding. The programme will run for the period of a school year and will not interfere with the school curriculum.

Harilal stated “While we build the technology to scale the project, we will take on the format of monthly programmes that will consist of lessons, practical exercises, fireside conversations and leadership dialogues. The aim is to provide an environment that stimulates and encourages entrepreneurial activity and interest in new venture creation.”

“South Africa, and in fact the continent at large, will need many efforts to drive our economy forward. Developing projects to stimulate entrepreneurship is a small effort towards solving a bigger problem. My aim is to further unlock knowledge as I head towards my PHD studies. I am hoping to invite like-minded champions of economic development to connect to our pipeline and help build a cohort and ecosystem of relevance where innovators can connect to support structures that will help propel their programmes forward.” says Harilal.

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